

# LISTEN, LISTEN!



SELECTIONS FROM  
CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
With Guest Poet Lucille Lang Day









# *Listen, Listen*

Featuring  
Guest Poet  
Lucille Lang Day

**Central Piedmont Community College**

***To Order, contact:***

***THE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING***

Central Piedmont Community College

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	i
Preface	iii
Reading Between Cedars	iv
<b>I. Listen To Your Own Voice</b>	1
Tumor ✂ Lucille Lang Day ✂	2
Revelation ✂ Kelly Bradley ✂	3
Getaway ✂ Charles "Chip" Coln ✂	4
Tasting The World ✂ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✂	5
Growing ✂ Kelly Bradley ✂	6
Of This World ✂ Kiernan McMahon ✂	7
Look At Your Passing Life ✂ Reza Jarrahizadeh ✂	8
1942 ✂ Wilton Parr ✂	10
Foreigners ✂ Kelly Bradley ✂	11
Wood-Carved Horse In Autumn ✂ Jacqueline Marcus ✂	12
Vietnam ✂ Kathryn Starcher ✂	14
The Child Of Light Goes To Bed ✂ Kelly Bradley ✂	15
Two Haiku ✂ Dino Bryant ✂	16
Saint Of The Wretched Mother ✂ Kenneth Bible ✂	17
El Chingue ✂ Stella Hastie ✂	18
Tappings ✂ Wilton Parr ✂	19
Who Will Raise You? ✂ Marisha Corey ✂	20
Urban Legend ✂ Dino Bryant ✂	21
A Lemon-Drop Moon ✂ Kenneth Bible ✂	22
<b>II. Listen To Nature</b>	36
from Field Notes: Sea Slugs ✂ Lucille Lang Day ✂	37
Periwinkles ✂ Harry Aoyagi ✂	38
Four Haiku ✂ Meg Haskins ✂	39
The Tick ✂ Markus Moore ✂	40
Cycles ✂ Wilton Parr ✂	41
Fall At Its Best ✂ Gary David Roland ✂	43
Palace Gates ✂ Kiernan McMahon ✂	45
Winter Day ✂ Lara Wagner ✂	46
Sunday Afternoon Snow ✂ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✂	47
The Way To Dance ✂ Kenneth Bible ✂	48
Sky & Telescope's Challenge: Rename the Big Bang	
✂ Lucille Lang Day ✂	49
from The Evolution of Passion ✂ Lucille Lang Day ✂	50



<b>III. Listen To This Place</b>	52
Pentimento ✂ Jacqueline Marcus ✂	53
<b>Dispensation: My Father Paints the Golden Gate</b>	
✂ Phyllis Sanchez Gussler ✂	54
Riding The Mad Mouse ✂ Phyllis Sanchez Gussler ✂	56
Marietta Street ✂ Shirley Allen ✂	58
Peasant Coat (c.1540) ✂ Jacqueline Marcus ✂	59
Fat City ✂ Kathryn Starcher ✂	61
Full Count ✂ Philip Laganis ✂	62
Reality Shattered ✂ Joanne Ferguson ✂	63
Two Haiku ✂ Eric Harris ✂	64
Coffin, Coffin ✂ Eric Harris ✂	65
Flamingo Point ✂ Stella Hastie ✂	66
Pleasure's Machine ✂ Kiernan McMahon ✂	67
 <b>IV. Listen To Your Heart</b>	 70
Dancing In The Night Garden ✂ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✂	71
Haiku ✂ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✂	72
Compassionate Tickle ✂ Danielle Goldfisher ✂	73
Old Man Of The Forest ✂ Ryan McMahon ✂	74
Heat ✂ Erica Tyler-Haw ✂	75
Peachy Keen ✂ Dino Bryant ✂	76
Fairy-tale Storm ✂ Jennifer E. Pagliaro ✂	79
To Trick Or Treat ✂ Gary David Roland ✂	81
The Booger ✂ Danielle Goldfisher ✂	83
Perception ✂ Marisha Corey ✂	84
Better Than I Deserve ✂ Ryan McMahon ✂	86
You Can Keep ✂ Kathryn Starcher ✂	87
The Little Death ✂ Kelly Bradley ✂	88
Jack ✂ Kathryn Starcher ✂	89
The Yellow Flower ✂ Reza Jarrahizadeh ✂	90
Draw ✂ Wael Salman ✂	92
 <b>V. Listen To The Poet</b>	 93
Poet Lucille Lang Day: An Interview	94



## Preface

Frank Granger of the Center For Teaching And Learning asked me to put together this book, and I thank him for that opportunity, as well as for all of his direction and support. We, the CPCC Literary Club could not have put this book together if it weren't for him and many others. First, for the members of the Club who served as the editorial board: Meg Haskins, Chip Coln, Lara Wagner, Philip Laganis, Markus Moore, Marisha Corey, Chad Schwalbach, Kenneth Bible, Annie English, Kelly Bradley and Kiernan McMahon. Next, the writers who gave us, on short notice, a deluge of submissions, including Jacqueline Marcus, the editor of *ForPoetry.com* magazine, and author of *Close to the Shore* (MSUP, 2002). Including also Reza Jarrahizadeh, for his patience as we struggled to translate the music of his original Farsi verse into English. I must thank the contributing editors: Stella Hastie and Patricia Kennedy Bostian. Also, two guest poets: Phyllis Sanchez Gussler, a Charlotte writer; and Dino Bryant, from Lubbock. And finally, the poet Lucille Lang Day, who was gracious enough to give us poems and to be interviewed. Ms. Day is the author of four books of poems, including *Infinites*, (Cedar Hill, 2002). A more complete list of assistance would have to include people in the SGA, at *Keystone*, in the English, Reading And Humanities Division, among many others.

If there is a meaning to the title *Listen, Listen*, it is simply to remind us to take in what we might otherwise miss, in this case the voices and the poetic choices of students, and others. All but a few of the pieces in this book were written by, and chosen for inclusion by CPCC students. The cover is simply a picture of a sculpture done by one of our students, Wilton Parr. His *The Quest* is a piece which I had, in my natural haste, overlooked for several years.

Brad Bostian

## Reading Between Cedars

Come in, the great quest is  
denial: the long day,

and having everything.

Stop trying  
to wallet the world. Dusk falls.

Remove your time and sit.

You've talked, now green briar,  
bark flakes all around,

no tempting by gods

and starlets in their vogue,  
no internet goblin market.

See ants follow trails

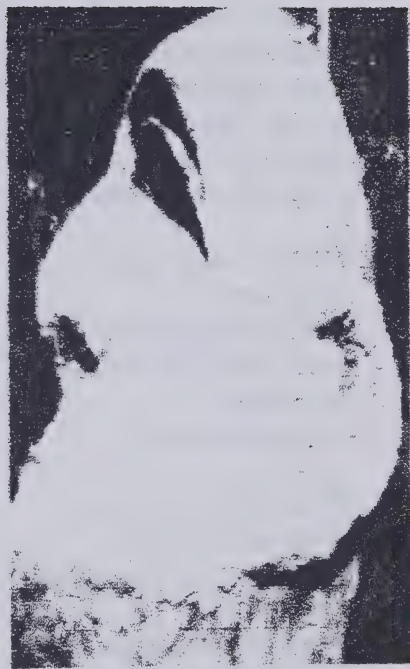
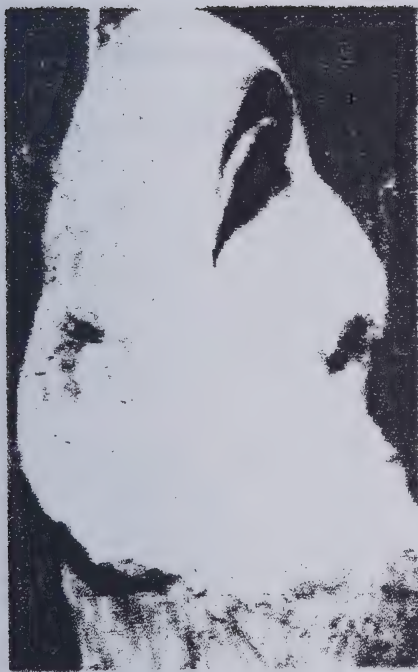
chained to silence.  
Follow nothing. Shut me out too,

quiet of all thought

between cedars.  
What is that book

in your hand?

## Listen To Your Own Voice



## Tumor

✍ Lucille Lang Day ✍

Small and flat,  
I inhabit the mind---  
a landscape of pale stars  
and electric trees,  
where mountains fold on fields,  
pearl on gray.

I crouch between cells  
by the great salt lake  
of the lateral ventricle.  
All day I hear  
the hiss of blood  
twisting through tissue.

I begin to sing. I am  
a tiny siren  
calling the capillaries  
to my cove. They come---  
red serpents  
coiling around me.

Oh how they love me!  
Bringing their gifts  
of food and nectar. I fatten,  
slowly at first,  
then faster and faster, until  
I am round as a planet.

My cells spread everywhere,  
each one a seed of another self,  
but the skull closes  
over a desert  
tangled with old roots.  
Sand starts to blow.



## Revelation

✍ Kelly Bradley ✍

An imp ran across my soul just now  
With a quick and fervent whisper halfway breathed.  
Something is dancing behind the veil that separates this life  
From the dreadful beauty of the lightning, thunderings, and voices  
That press against my weak ears.  
It is the sound of distant bells singing  
And what those voices will tell when they grow up.  
I want to stand up and laugh out loud  
Or fall and tremble in the ecstasy of relief.

All my worry is so silly.

## Getaway

✍ Charles “Chip” Coln ✍

Lonely nights while the sun goes down  
I see the moon and the trees bend,  
Birds that fly very high.  
I need to leave this city,  
Make my own way in life.  
Ants build huts with nuts—  
I’m choking with need to go.  
How does it feel to be loved?

# Tasting The World

✍ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✍

Tell me the taste of the Judas tree,  
Baby all-mouth,  
rough gray bark across your tongue;  
the gentle curve of the hosta,  
tiny green and white striped onions, first of the season,  
pulled from bright red containers, dirt  
clinging to hollow greens, your chin;  
screen door, damp with rain, smelling  
of pennies and fog.

Tell me the taste of play, Baby all-mouth,  
warm sand beneath your knees;  
rusty chains of the swing, air streaming;  
the slap of water in the dog's bowl;  
musky leather moccasins; brushed suede  
of an old magnolia leaf; droplets  
from the sprinkler, warmth  
rising from the brick steps.

Tell me the taste of life, my son.  
The pencil's woody skin, the pen's  
slick ridges and oily tip;  
paper: yellow pads, sticky envelope glue,  
edge of a Christie novel;  
the phone's spiraled cord; the dust  
beneath the bed.

Baby all-mouth, wetly pressed to my chest,  
tiny teeth clamping my finger,  
tell me the taste of love.

## Growing

✍ Kelly Bradley ✍

Your long hair,  
So long on your small head  
Like ivy tendrils climbing a wall  
Or a tomato vine on a stake.  
You twist up and around me  
Curving until I can't find myself  
Between your leaves.

Your hands,  
Such soft smoothly tapering leaf shapes.  
Sometimes, when I hold them in mine  
I want to squeeze them hard  
Make them into a different shape  
That is easier for me to hold.

You used to be so close that I thought you were riding on my back.  
I tried to dodge your heart-shaped hands grasping for mine.  
I wanted to run away from you.

Now, you only visit me occasionally  
In lonely dreams of slowly twisting vines  
And I miss you.



## Of This World

✍ Kiernan McMahon ✍

They are temporal things,  
Like horses upon a vast plain,  
Racing toward extinction.  
Feathered ambitions  
Flutter past my face  
Carried by caressing winds.  
Flashing points of misty light,  
Quickly fading into distant air.  
They go past, they are  
Feathers made of ice.

## Look At Your Passing Life

✍ Reza Jarrahizadeh ✍

از بر خانه و کاشانه و می‌خانه برفت  
عاقبت قرعه به نامه دل دی‌وانه برفت  
چون که این سوز جگر از بر می‌خانه برفت  
هر که گفتم به تمسخر ز در خانه برفت  
هر چه بردم ثمری بود کز آن عمر چهل ساله برفت  
تو بگو تا که ز خاک آمد و بر خاک برفت  
چون که ما را به گنه نامه اعمال برفت  
تو بگو تا که دل از خاک پر از خار برفت

و نگر این گذر عمر که ی‌کباره برفت  
هر چه کردم از این قوم مجزا باشم  
من دگر می‌به چه امید بنوشم تو بگو  
به که گویم که دگر بار سفر باید بست  
من ندانم که چه با خود به کجا خواهم برد  
دگر این جامه فرسوده نخواهم ای دل  
دگر این جامه تهی را تو بنوش ای ساقی  
دگر از دولت یاران خبری باز آمد

## Look At Your Passing Life

✍ Reza Jarrahizadeh ✍

Look how your passing life all at once leaves you;  
It leaves from your cottage, house or tavern.  
As much as I tried to be separate from the dying,  
Finally the lot fell upon my crazy heart.  
From now on why should I drink wine, tell me,  
When its burning warmth is leaving with my life?  
How should I say I'm packing for the trip?  
Whoever I tell ridicules me and leaves.  
I don't know what I'll take to which place;  
Whatever it is should be the fruit of forty years—  
But I don't need this old garment. My higher self,  
Tell others that the body came from mud and will go back.  
From now on, drink this empty cup, tavern keeper,  
I have done enough guilty deeds already.  
If one from our group of friends asks for me,  
Say his spirit has left this land of thistle and thorn.

1942

✍ Wilton Parr ✍

The forlorn moans of the whistle  
break the country stillness.  
Black plumes of smoke puff above the trees.  
The train grows louder,  
breaking out of the woods.

Powerful, pulsating, tugging  
Tanks, trucks, big guns,  
and countless cars  
filled with men going to war.

A farm boy watches the train go by,  
and dreams of heroic adventure  
in far away places.  
A soldier on the train sees a farm house,  
and dreams of home.



## Foreigners

✍ Kelly Bradley ✍

Hello philosopher

I'm following as you cross this green and concrete campus

Where you threaten no one and will not be put to death.

In the ancient shade of an elm

Fragrant mushrooms grow like foreigners

And in that shade we hide and dream.

## Wood-Carved Horse In Autumn

✍ Jacqueline Marcus ✍

And if the sun hangs its locket of gold,  
Its chain and watch,  
In a century too late for words,  
Don't let it break you.  
There will always be time for thought,  
For autumn's persuasion,  
The apple orchards and many acres of wheat.

Was it autumn when the Trojans lost their lives to the Greeks? When  
they wheeled the beautiful wood-carved horse,  
Twice as tall as the Trojan's fort,  
Into the welcoming homes,  
The opened gates, as a gift that would end the war?  
Ah, such a miserable deception.

Even as a child,  
It was the first story that impressed me.  
They slaughtered old Grandfather Priam  
And left him for the dogs,  
Like pigmeat.  
They raped the girls, enslaved their wives,  
But when they dragged the little boy into the gold-dust air  
For the final execution, a sound rose  
With such pain, anguish, that no one could move,  
Every bird, man, child, held still,  
As the sound rose and circled the wind, a long  
Way up, higher and over the blood-  
Stained tides where it turned into a circling hawk  
Above the hollow fortress.

This much I remember as a child.  
And my mother who warned,  
Suffering opens the eyes to truth . . .

But as I was saying,  
Autumn is a season for reflection,  
A road, winding down the coast,  
Orchards, and many acres of wheat.

Inland, the cornfields stretch for hundreds of miles,  
And I dreamed of green throughout the night.  
Maybe it was the beginning of day, the afternoon?  
Either way, I was lonely.

The hills curved like a slow bend, like the naked shoulders, The golden  
summer of a girl asleep.

How I would like to walk that road between the hills  
And the confusion of autumn.

I can't help thinking  
What if the beautiful wood-carved horse  
Had been a gift  
Instead of that miserable deception?

## Vietnam

✍ Kathryn Starcher ✍

I never understood his silence or the courage he maintained  
just that I loved him for the warmth in his eyes  
I wonder now if he awoke from his slumber  
to soldiers carrying other men's limbs  
hearing gunfire and bombs in the background  
I wonder what he went through for the ribbons on his uniform  
and what went through his mind when fighting  
on blood-stained beaches or in destroyed towns  
I couldn't ask him about this if he was here now  
the malicious wounds and deaths these men endured  
Often I wish he were still here now  
I'm lucky to have met him at all and have what I have  
Though if fades day by day I will always remember  
the warmth of his silence, bravery he had to survive the chaos  
and the way I always knew he loved us  
without his having said it once



## The Child Of Light Goes To Bed

✍ Kelly Bradley ✍

I am a tender reed in the leaves of my bed  
And my room is a garden of wonder.  
An almond tree blooms in the corner  
And waves its long arms to chide me to sleep.  
When I call to my father in a tiny starling voice,  
He cannot help coming to kiss me.  
With the kiss he sends me off to dream  
Of storms and seas and I am not afraid.

## Two Haiku

✍ **Dino Bryant** ✍

### Polar Shift

Success and failure  
never stand still, instead they  
often trade places

### With Time Remaining

Sick men are shortly  
off course whereas the dead man  
is lost forever . . .

# Saint Of The Wretched Mother

✍ Kenneth Bible ✍

Woman old before her time,  
Silent girth and television-made;  
Lurking in a past built upon  
The promise of fairy-tale passions.

A wretch made immaculate with longing,  
Cleverly built with salt and bone  
To resemble a completed human being:  
The rest was put on layaway.

Accidentally trusting fate and a future drunk;  
Living now two lifetimes,  
At once in the constant past,  
Another forfeited to a daughter's future.

Her eyes, that store joy like a cancer;  
A tumor of goodness  
Lying unspent in her liver,  
Purified for a young girl's consumption.

"You shall not stumble through life as I have,"  
She will say,  
"My mistakes will be my crucifixion,  
So that you may be reconceived.

"In my body and my blood  
But not in my image;  
You shall be pure and hopeful,  
As I slowly burn away."

## El Chingue

✍ Stella Hastie ✍

At the gate, I, the new boarding  
student, stand before them,  
the starch-wimpled nuns  
of Lestognac, wondering how  
they learned to restrain  
sweat, to avoid its rolling  
wildly, in lusty rivulets  
so that now, in the sultriest  
noon of a tropic's summer, only  
a sheen covers their faces.  
Rigid, in silence, I must listen  
to Mother Superior instructing  
me that more important than  
white socks and ironed uniforms  
--above all--when showering,  
wear that calico smock, El Chingue!

Next dawn, Mother leads us  
into cubicles. Half doors  
let soap scents wander,  
the sound of sloshing,  
and the roar of gushing water  
as chingues swathe bodies,  
covering timid slopes and breasts  
milk had barely chiseled.  
And while birdcalls come  
through windows, and chapel  
bells are tolling the Angelus,  
Mother paces the showers,  
her robe's hem rustling over the tiles,  
and to her order: "Time's up!"  
I peel off the wet husk, feel it  
at my feet since my flesh—God's  
bare pulp--needs light to ripen.

## Tappings

✍ Wilton Parr ✍

Springtime warmth,  
the gray of winter gone.  
Nature shows its green.  
Twos dot the campus lawn.

A lone figure, a boy,  
last to leave class,  
emerges into the sunlight,  
tapping his way along the walk.  
His blank stare  
reveals the darkness he sees.

His hearing keen,  
the quiet talk and sweet nothings  
of college kids  
taunt his loneliness.

Another tapping, he hears.  
Another lone figure, a girl,  
making her way to class.  
Their sweeping sticks touch.  
They stop and smile  
to unseeing eyes.

His nervous laugh  
shows shyness.  
Her friendly voice,  
eagerness to please.

A few moments shared,  
then parting,  
he taps his way slowly on.  
She taps her way to class.



## Who Will Raise You?

✍ Marisha Corey ✍

*Gravity is growing old.*

Someone applied a period and made  
Our sentence end.  
And so start a new one, only a wise mind  
Would say!

Did you hear?  
Infinity and Death are divorcing.  
Who will get the child?

# Urban Legend

✍ Dino Bryant ✍

Willie  
Morril  
the  
pick  
awakening  
our  
solid  
brown  
warrior  
the  
jet  
black  
afro  
man  
the  
puff  
the  
fluff  
the  
seventies  
the  
chase  
the  
rhythm  
on  
top  
of  
his  
head

# A Lemon-Drop Moon

✍ Kenneth Bible ✍

The snow had retreated by the time the sun went down, and Cad squinted hard to see the last fingertips of it brush past the lights dangling in the trees. He was just coming off a fresh nod, and to him they were not trees at all; they were skeletons marching on a frozen river; defeated soldiers returning home. He squinted again. It was his own defeat he watched, broken by his narrowing addiction.

No. Perry was a junkie, not him; and this was his neighborhood. Snow crunched beneath the tires of his car as he drove along the silent street, the inhabitants already settled for Friday night programming.

It was pure, uncut Connecticut suburbia, the aroma of eggnog mixing with car exhaust as he tossed his cigarette. He thought about the residents, all insulated from the winter and each other, and he smiled. Above it all, the moon paled and turned yellow, and bled into the sky a bit.

Cad pulled up to the driveway and ran his fingers through his hair. His legs felt heavy, like bricks. His nod was going away fast. He considered a hit to get his head straight before seeing Mari, but thought better of it. He lit another cigarette instead and waited amid flickering living room windows and withered snowmen.

After two more cigarettes, Perry emerged from the darkened house, dressed in dirty tan cargo shorts and red Chucks with the socks that were barely visible.

Perry was precariously thin, and always wore the same shorts and sneakers, regardless of the weather. He had glassy blue eyes and a jumble of straw colored hair, which he attributed to his being mostly German. No one really cared; Perry was a social island, and did not make friends easily.

His parents, with whom he still lived, were Jehovah's Witnesses, and had tried to raise their child with strict adherence to the Gospels. Despite their efforts, however, Perry remained an obstinate child. At one point he went to a Christian summer camp for rehabilitation; it was one of those tough-love camps that were popular in the eighties. He eventually returned from camp claiming to have seen the light. His

parents were naturally skeptical. His father beat him with a broken chair leg just to be sure.

The reasons for Perry's sudden change were plain: he had finally come out of the closet, and he had also discovered the therapeutic qualities of heroin. His parents, ignorant of these excesses, attributed it to the Spirit of the Lord. For Perry, it was the only way he could continue a lifestyle of sex and dope without arousing suspicion.

Perry knocked on the passenger window to signal Cad to unlock it. Cad thought about being cruel for a moment, but decided to just reach over and unlock it. There would be plenty of time for torment later on.

Perry opened the door and, shedding the blanket of cold and snow he had collected, jumped in.

"What's up?" He stood there like a malnourished puppy.

"Not in the front, man. We still have to get Mari."

"Why can't she sit in the back? I was here first."

Cad stared at him emptily.

Perry stared back, the nighttime collecting behind him. Stray snowflakes started to invade the car through the unclosed door.

"You're here first because I chose to pick you up first," Cad shifted his weight towards Perry for emphasis. "And you're lucky I'm picking you up at all. Can you tell me why I have to drive all the way from my house out in Willimantic to pick you up? Do you realize how inconvenient that is for me?" His jacket creaked with added punctuation.

"Alright, alright. Jesus Christ. I'll sit in the back." He swung the door open. He clambered into the back, causing more noise than his narrow frame should have allowed.

Cad reached over and shut the passenger door, making sure to lock it. His shirt felt like sandpaper. His nod had left for good.

"You been riding?" Perry cooed in acquiescence.

"Not in the snow." Cad remembered his last visit with his mother. He had promised her he wouldn't ride the bike in the snow.

"Remember how your brother died," she said during a commercial.

'My brother died because he was a drunk,' Cad said to himself. At least the girlfriend was lucky; she died right away.

It was only a matter of time was how Cad looked at it. You misbehave long enough, and they're going to punish you.

'Like all things,' Cad thought again.

Cad promised her anyway; he was a rotten son. The only reason he rode at all was for the image. He looked the part: biker jacket, long dark hair, combat boots, and the whole deal. He was witty and tall, with bright hazel eyes and smooth, fair skin that women found attractive.

As the car pulled away from the silent neighborhood, Cad could hear the unique metallic whisper of aluminum foil shuffle out from Perry's pocket, his knees pressing through Cad's seat as he slouched down to fish his Zippo, buried deep in the other pocket. All around, anticipation swelled, thickening the air in the cabin; pressurizing it.

A sharp pause shot from the backseat.

"Hey, man. You, uh, got any? I kinda chased the last of my stash waiting for you."

"Yeah." Cad pulled two nickel-bags from the inside pocket of his jacket, and hesitated. He held the tiny plastic bags up to the passing streetlamps, watching as the light raced up to capture them, and then wash silently and hurriedly away, again and again.

'The world is under a fan,' he thought, 'cooling it all, slowing it all down.' He could hear the windshield wipers far away, trying to keep time with their own shallow backbeat, unsuccessfully. Cad felt his eyelids sink under the weight of accidental clarity. He glanced outside, to his left. The snow was gone.

"Hey, what's up, man?" Perry's voice was childlike, tinny. "You gonna give it or what?"

Cad dropped his eyes from the tiny bags, and looked up though the windshield. His face, framed by a lemon-drop moon, looked back. Its eyes were yellow.

He flicked the bags into the backseat with his fingers, listening to Perry scramble for them. Cad could see him, through the passing strobe lights as the world leapt by, trying not to be desperate.

'Like all things,' Cad remembered.

"You're such an asshole sometimes," Perry whispered to himself, emptying the contents of the bag into the wedge of foil, caring for it as if it were his last. He stuffed the other bag into his cargo shorts. A moment later, the click of his Zippo cut into the amber silence, and Cad watched the light flicker and bounce from the dashboard, confusing everything. Soon, the smoke began washing over the ordinary odors of sweat and worry that normally occupied the car. Cad lit a cigarette and rolled down the window a little. Cold unfiltered light tumbled in through



the narrow channel, and the competing flavors took their battle into the night air.

By the time they arrived at Mari's apartment in Hartford, Perry's nod was definitely on. He was lying on his back, eyes closed, rolling his slim torso in slow-motion. Cad occasionally saw him in the mirror, watching the yellow strobe-light leapfrog across his trance-induced body. Cad pulled up to the curb, tossed his cigarette, and honked the horn. The sound reverberated through the hollows of the barren, freshly-plowed streets, turned a corner, and disappeared.

A few minutes later, Mari emerged from the common entrance. She was dressed in long, black leather boots and a red plaid skirt, leaving just a sliver of her slender, bare legs to fixate on. Her blouse was a simple white cotton button down, stretching demurely across her chest and revealing only the very top of her cleavage. As she walked towards the car, the streetlamps lit a feathery halo around her coppery hair. Cad reached over and unlocked the passenger door.

Perry was still on his back, this time with his eyes closed, humming something, oblivious. Mari came around into the street, opened the door, and slid into the seat. Cad quickly wiped away the moisture gathered on his temple, before she could see. But, she knew already; she knew him.

"Hey." She reached over, and kissed him delicately on the forehead, on the lips. He felt her long, cool fingers slip into his hair with fluid, familiar strokes.

"Thanks for picking me up."

A knowing smile parted her lips again as she shut the door and settled into her seat. Cad flushed. He felt warm and his skin prickled on the back of his neck. He wasn't sure; was it Mari, or because he hadn't had a hit since before nightfall? Cad smiled pathetically and, ignoring the heaviness of his limbs, drove into the silent night and towards the Club. His desire for a fix was beginning to override his anticipation of seeing Mari. He didn't like that, but knew it was a consequence of being who he was, of being a junkie. That's part of the reason why he liked Mari so much; she was his exception, his salvation.

"What's up, Mar?" Perry cooed from his spot in the back. Mari hated this nickname; it reminded her of her flaws. Her Flaws. Perry knew his.

"Hey, Perry." She said flatly, wielding a confectionary smile.

Red and green holiday banners pulsed by in rhythmic fashion amid the glittering, naked trees that lined the frosty avenues of downtown Hartford as they rapidly approached the Club.

Feeling the weight of guilt or sobriety, Perry offered Mari a free hit, as atonement for his earlier remark. It was the best he could do, honestly. To him, this was the pinnacle of graciousness; to him, this was the ultimate sacrifice. But Mari would have none of it. Her only habit that came even remotely close to theirs was an occasional toke, which, to Cad, was like comparing a snowflake to an avalanche.

"No, thanks," she said simply. A narrow, white light congealed around her as Cad turned the car along the narrow lane of Pratt Street.

Perry reclined further into the backseat, and said nothing, being absorbed by the passing shadows flitting across his angular face. Cad buried the fingers of his left hand further into the steering wheel, wiping moisture from his forehead with his right. Both were shaking. Spiders crawled up under his shirt, pressing on his prickly flesh with eagerness and delight. He was going on a nod. In the club. In the bathroom. Wherever. It was all going to happen, soon. Soon.

Soon.

Mari lit a mentholated cigarette, and pretended not to notice. In time, she knew that he would come around to her, that he would somehow transcend his addiction, his illness, and then he would be hers forever.

'It was going to be a great night,' she thought as her smoke hid the yellow moon. 'As long as Johnny isn't at the Club.'

Cad had met Johnny during one of his brief stints in NA, and, each recognizing certain qualities in each other, they hit it off instantly. Johnny was unpredictable, though; he had a recurring crack hobby that always made you remember where your wallet was. He was a paradigm of success through failure; he had been through his twelve steps so often that sometimes he would just skip the first eight steps and go right to the ninth, so he could borrow money from people after apologizing to them. He would also occasionally accept work from his dealer, applying his abundant charm and a pair of pliers to reluctant junkies. That's where the ninth step comes in handy later on, during moments of accidental sobriety and poverty. It was probably a foregone conclusion that on the same day Mari couldn't find her 35mm camera, Johnny came back to the apartment with a new high and an even newer leather jacket. It was deep red, the color of a hemorrhage. It fit Johnny perfectly.

Johnny had shiny blue eyes, which took on deeper meaning when he was high. His body was lean and muscular from years of improper diet, with all of the requisite bulges in their proper places, including his crotch. His sexual prowess was legendary in Hartford, and women turned into rivers whenever he approached them for sex or money. He had a voice that seduced even as his eyes searched your pockets. He also had an abundance of self-confidence without actually appearing arrogant. Cad often silently thanked God for inventing crippling addiction whenever Johnny was with him.

As for Mari, it turns out that she had been in a car accident a few years ago, crushing a promising modeling career along with the bone and cartilage in her nose. A sympathetic surgeon had done an amazing job, though. The curve in her nose was barely noticeable. It just kept taking a very slight left, regardless of the direction she traveled. The scar was tiny, with tiny buttons of flesh where the stitches had eventually come out. One late night, months later, as the flaw stared across the gap between her and bathroom mirror, Mari quietly resolved to collect all of the resentment and she had long since mortgaged, and to save it forever. She slept soundly that night, firmly content in her newly acquired salvation.

Aside from the scar, though, she was beautiful. She was tall even before putting on those boots she liked. Long, curly chestnut hair rested just between her shoulders; and she had broad, curvy hips that felt like a warm rocking chair when you were in them. Her eyes were green and sharp, looking through people as easily as she looked at them.

"There's a spot." It was Perry, leaning over the middle, invigorated. "There, There," he pointed nervously, as if the two could not notice him otherwise.

Perry always said things he thought were important three times. His philosophy was simple: if you say a thing three times, you will never forget it. Ever. While this trick appeared ridiculous, Cad had tried it a few times, and it seemed to worked.

They were two blocks from the club, and Cad could just now see the narrow space parting before him as he moved towards it.

"I see it, Perry." Cad cut the wheel to sneak in, but couldn't quite slow down enough in the snow to make it. Cad was cautious like that. He would have to pass the spot and back in, instead. He pulled up just past it, lining himself up perfectly with the car in front of the coveted spot, now to his right.



"Perry, could you please move so I can see where the hell I'm going?" Cad turned, putting his arm deliberately around Mari. She felt it shaking underneath his leather jacket. Perry slumped back, into the shadows.

As Cad cut the wheel and began backing into the spot, he heard the sound of another car creak along the snowy straits of Pratt Street, sneaking up behind him. The lights of the other car crept through the rear window, intruding upon the entire cabin, filling it with stale remnants of blue and yellow smoke.

"What the hell?" Cad was halfway into the spot; it was his by default. He didn't understand, did this guy not see him? Or was he just trying to be a prick? Cad quickly ran through the possibilities, hoping to find a generous and rapid solution to the problem. He wasn't a pacifist by any means, he simply was not in any condition for a confrontation, and he wasn't sure how Mari would handle his getting in a fight over a parking space. Still, here was a delicate balance to be struck. He did not want to back down and seem like a coward, but he didn't want to get his ass kicked in front of Mari, either. Perry was basically useless in these situations, too. Where was Johnny when you needed him?

The intruder honked his horn irritatingly, confirming Cad's suspicions that this guy was just a prick who thought he could muscle his way into the spot. Through the haze of the headlamps silhouetting Perry through the window, He couldn't tell what kind of car it was; perhaps an Audi, or something equally obnoxious. Johnny would be pleased; he loved Audis. Cad pushed the middle of his wheel in response, and for a few moments the two were locked in a contest of stamina, the cacophony of bleating horns chasing each other throughout the snow-lit alleyways of downtown.

After a few moments, the drivers both ceased, each succumbing to the ridiculousness of their actions. High above the fray, perched upon its silvery scaffolding, the moon turned slowly on its back, and blushed a subtle shade of yellow.

Cad inched back a little more toward the other car, in an attempt to intimidate. His heart was pounding at this point; his legs had shackles around them. It was a struggle just to step on the brake. This was more than he could handle at the moment.

Nothing. The other car wasn't moving. In between tides of nausea, he felt a definite fight coming on. And he was going to lose. Badly.

Mari, who had been turning around to glimpse the unfolding drama, turned back to Cad. "Let's just go, Cad. We'll find another space. It's not worth it." He looked at her through Spring-filled eyes; she was beautiful. Perry rigidly said nothing.

Before he could acquiesce to her, however, the other car suddenly jolted backwards, dug its rear tires into the soft sheet of snow beneath, and, like a defeated suitor, retreated around Cad's car and was gone. Cad silently congratulated himself; it was indeed an Audi.

After watching the other car glide ominously down Pratt Street and vanish, the air inside their own car returned to normal. The windows were beaded and humid with collected anxiety. Mari turned her eyes on Cad, filled with something more than affection. She kissed him again, delicately, lightly. He placed his hand on her cheek, filling it with silk and warmth.

Soon.

Perry sighed and ran a bony arm across one of the windows, peering out like a possum. "I thought we were going to get into a serious fight there. A serious fight."

"Yeah." Cad backed into the spot with relief.

They retreated from the car each into the breath of the winter night. Cad pulled Mari to him, wrapping her waist in his arm as they walked. Perry trailed a few respectful steps behind, appearing immune to the cold and frost in his sneakers and shorts.

As they walked on, the gratuitous melodies of the Club became clearer, more distinct. Each tone, every beat drifted purposefully past them; each an incantation, a summons to another place. The Club was always an easy place to get to, regardless of where you started.

The real entrance to the Club was actually behind the main building, and they walked down the broad, sweeping flight of stairs to get in. Their footsteps padded delicately on the paved and steaming stairs as each descended, the sounds of their footsteps muffled by the impending clamor of music and wailing that wafted from just below. A sign hung above the arch of the doorway, but it was in Latin, and no one could read it.

A price had to be paid to enter, but Cad knew Johnny, who was friends with the owner, and so everyone got in for free. As Cad neared the threshold to the place, climbing deeper into the folds of the thickening smoke and pitch, he could think only of the sweet, pristine conditions of the nod.



Soon.

Mari, hesitating at the doorway, grabbed Cad's arm just as he stood on the threshold of the outside and the Club. The light from the top of the stairs had lit down upon her head and face, lending her a radiance that Cad hadn't seen before.

"Are you sure you want to go in here?" Her voice wavered, even as her eyes remained fixed upon her intentions. "We could just go back to my place, if you want. The elevator in my building's even working now; we wouldn't even have to climb the stairs."

"Come on!" It was Perry, nudging her from behind with his elbow, half-joking. "We going in or what? I gotta piss."

Cad smiled at Mari. "We're already here," he said, kissing her. "It's easier just to go in. Come on, I can't see; you guide me." He took her hand in his and placed her in front of him, and in they went.

The air was moist and hot with the labor of hundreds of souls roiling against each other. The melodies that had summoned them earlier were now carefully scripted overtures of electronic chaos, ringing out familiar rhythms that everyone could toil and sweat to, regardless of their state of insobriety.

The place was unfathomably huge, with nine floors; each claiming its own distinct and separate theme, with serpentine couches dispersing themselves at meticulously chosen random points throughout each one. The lighting was near-pyrotechnical, as electronic snow lit upon the walls, grandly overpowering the weaker accumulation without. Random patterns traced and etched themselves onto the floors, writhing, evolving; chasing the throbbing population, while music untouched by human hands continually whipped and frothed the pulsating throngs into a nighttime fury of absolute abandon. It was the perfect escape from the travails of the day-lit mundane, a haven for those who needed a relief from daily burdens of regrets and wishes and responsibilities.

Most importantly, it was the perfect place to nod.

Mari wanted to get a drink first, however, before she would let Cad go. She grabbed him by the arm with both her hands, pretending to drag him to the safety of the bar. If it were not Mari, he would not be pretending at this point. He had not had a hit since the sun went down, and he was definitely starting to feel strung out. He knew what he was like then, and he did not want her to see it. He needed to retreat, to regather himself. The skin at the back of his neck prickled, and bristled, and cracked.

Soon.

Mari ordered a cosmopolitan for herself and a beer for Cad. Perry was gone as soon as they entered the club, presumably to go find action of his own special variety. He was broke, though, and Cad was confident that he would turn up sooner rather than later.

Virgil was bartending; bold and ruggedly handsome, with dark, flashing eyes and dark hair brought back into a ponytail, he was always a delight to the women who found their way to him. Cad trusted him.

There was no room at all at the bar to sit, so they made do with standing near it, like ships around an island.

Soon.

"So. why are you so quiet around me?" Mari asked him suddenly, purposely. "You're usually so talkative around your friends. What's up?"

He couldn't tell if she was teasing him or being serious.

"Well," Cad hesitated for a moment, lowering his eyelids and trying to look calm, "I get a little nervous around you, you know? You're best-looking woman I've ever been out with." That was part of it.

Mari laughed, and took a sip of her drink. "Thanks." The music shifted like a pendulum. "But I see you talking to women all the time; they swim up to you like innocent little guppies."

Cad reflexively smiled at her compliment out of the corner of his mouth: a hereditary trademark. Even though he had only been four years old at the time, he was sure his dad wore that same smile the day he finally got kicked out. His brother had it, too. He loved it because it made women drop their guard, and he hated it because it was often involuntary, which meant that a well placed joke could upset that fine balance between lovable and ridiculous.

Thank God for heroin. Dope was the stereo equalizer for the brain; it set the treble and the bass, fine tuned the vocals, and mellowed the whole midrange right out. So Cad could smile with complete confidence when he had his nod on, the thoughts of which were now accumulating on his brain like snow. Like frost.

He couldn't wait. He felt nauseous.

He felt anxious and his legs were like rocks and his mouth was dry.

Yellowish spiders began marching along the surface of his body from the cracks in his flesh, sticking out of his veins like steel dandelions on his skin.

Like steel dandelions. On. His. Skin.

Steal Dandy Lions. On His Kin.

A thick knot crept up into his throat. The music bubbled up into a crescendo of repeating messages crawling across the inside ceiling.

'Thoom thoom thoom thoom thoom thoom thoom thoom thoom thoom,' they whispered. Cad attempted to nod in understanding, but didn't know how.

Blood and sweat filled into his pores, creeping into his eyes, his openings. He felt one eye being closed shut. Then another. Then another. It was singing to him. Sweetly. Screeching.

Candy cane with the red sucked out.

Through a large picture window, a lemon-drop moon nodded once with the music, and disappeared.

Now. Now. Now.

Now.

"Are you okay?" Mari's voice slid into his consciousness like the word of God. She was holding both his arms, looking right at him.

"Are you okay? You closed your eyes for a second and started mumbling. You scared me. Are you okay? Are you tired? Do you want to go?" There was a tremble in her voice that was not there before. It was like a stained-glass window cracking.

Cad snapped his eyes open. He shook his head violently and wiped the sweat from the back of his neck and swallowed down the knot in his throat. The music was relentless.

"I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine. I just need to go wash my face."

He smiled at her, weakly, trying to reassure her. But she was only beautiful.

Cad turned his back on her. He attempted to navigate the dance floor to get to the bathroom. The collective fury of the toiling mob engulfed him, made him feel temporarily insignificant.

He saw their faces, the people, whipping and wailing in disorganized heat; each one was telling him something, something he knew, but had forgotten.

Cad tried to sort it out, but the music would not allow it. His thoughts rested solely on getting to the bathroom. The nod. The nod.

They were telling him something.

Now.

Perry had his other nickel-bag.

"Damn," Cad said aloud.



The music, eavesdropping, agreed.

Cad retreated back to the bar, hoping to find Perry before his stash was inevitably gone. He reached Mari in far quicker time than he left. Mari, confused by his motivations for returning so quickly, hugged him, with her arms wrapped tightly about his neck. Delicately, he unwound her arms from his neck and smiled weakly. He wasn't sure if she was crying. Her eyes were wet, but it might have just been the lighting from above.

Cad turned to Virgil, who had watched the scene unfold with professional indifference. "Hey, have you seen Perry?" Cad had to shout to be heard, which he gratefully discovered brought him a little further into the reality of the moment.

"What?" Virgil shouted back, clearly unaware of any reality save his own.

"Have you seen Perry?" His voice flew like winged bells.

"I think I saw him go outside." Virgil turned around to face a rabid mob of stunning and needy women.

Cad turned and gave Mari a shallow kiss on the forehead and said, "I'll be right back. I promise."

Cad pushed his way through the pulsing waves and eventually outside into the gleaming, rigid cold of the evening. His regrets paved the stairs as he rounded them, ebbing and flowing between the crescendos of his desire. The music called back at him, as he watched his breath collide with the wind and get swept away.

Candy cane with the red sucked out.

"Perry!" He shouted into the alley. His voice was like a wedge of aluminum foil. "Perry, you prick; you better not have smoked my stash!" He was still nauseous, and the spiders had not actually left him.

Nothing.

Cad considered going back inside to look for him, but quickly though better of it, and remained. The cold air felt good on his skin, after all, after the oppression of the Club downstairs. His shirt was soaked.

"Perry!" Cad walked around the back corner just to make sure he wasn't by the dumpster, smoking the coveted stash.

"Jesus Christ!" Cad shouted, stopping immediately after rounding the corner into the alley. The spiders fled to the shadows, and consciousness temporarily returned.

Directly opposite of him, with a red leather jacket framed against the black brick facade, as calm and serene as snow, stood Johnny.

And, lying on the ground by the dumpster, his face bloodied and broken and still, was Perry.

His left leg was bent backwards in an unnatural position, with the red sneaker almost completely off the foot. Cad looked in an obscene silence as glassy blue eyes stared unblinkingly into the clouded sky, searching futilely for a yellow moon. Blood mixed casually with the snow and urine beneath him, emptying onto the ground around the dumpster. Cad almost immediately saw the nickel-bag in Perry's hand, clutching it, full of life.

"G'head. Pick it up." Johnny's voice was soothing and sympathetic.

Cad hesitated.

"Go on, man," Johnny laughed lightly, gesturing to the bag surrounded by the immaculate hand. "I'm your friend, I'm not gonna hurt you, dude," He added, "Go ahead."

Cad shuffled towards his dead and broken friend slowly, like someone afraid to startle a sleeping child. Perry looked like how one would picture a hemorrhage.

"He shouldn't have taken that parking spot," Johnny's said.

"What?" Cad barely heard it, far away, in that alley.

"You know what I'm talking about. He should have left the parking spot."

Cad's body stiffened as Johnny's words gathered momentum.

It was Johnny in that car. Johnny. He must have thought Perry was driving.

Perry must have told him he was driving.

Not Cad.

Perry.

And Johnny believed him. He believed him and Johnny smiled his smile and stood in the middle of the alley, collecting the shadows off the ground as he passed over them.

Perry was dead because he finally told a lie that someone believed and Johnny made him pay for it. For the parking spot. For pride.

And now Cad knew he would have to make a choice. Just like Perry must have.

Like Johnny.

The knot of vomit teetering in his throat. He palmed the nickel-bag in his hand and squeezed the life from it, but nothing spilled out. He looked down on his friend, pale and limp and innocent and dead. He



closed his eyes and pictured Mari, waiting for him to leave the Club with her, radiant and glowing with life and warmth and softness.

"Let's go back into the club, man. I don't want to get caught out here." Johnny rubbed his hands together in an effort to chase away the oncoming chill.

Cad could feel the first thick flakes of a new snow brush the tip of his nose before burning away from the rising heat of his flesh.

He unclenched his fist and looked down at the lifeless white thing burning his hand.

Johnny's legs were shaking from the cold. He stamped the ground with his boots.

"You coming or what, man?"

Cad caught his reflection off the light in a blacked-out window. There was no moon. Its eyes were lemon-drops.

"Yeah. I'm coming."

Johnny laughed. He loved junkies. So easy to deal with.

"Then let's go, dude, before someone finds us here."

He turned around to go back in. Cad watched him, but did not move. Mari was still in the club.

Johnny turned back. "Let's go, bro." His words had more weight than before.

"Yeah." Cad opened the tiny, lifeless thing in his hand.

He could hear the music from below, wailing.

Johnny was gone. The shadows in the alley had given him wings.

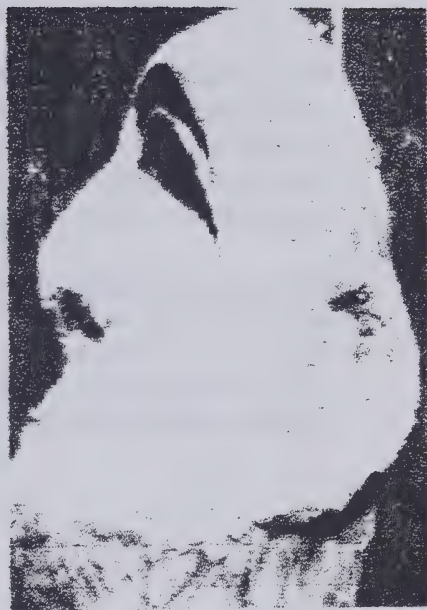
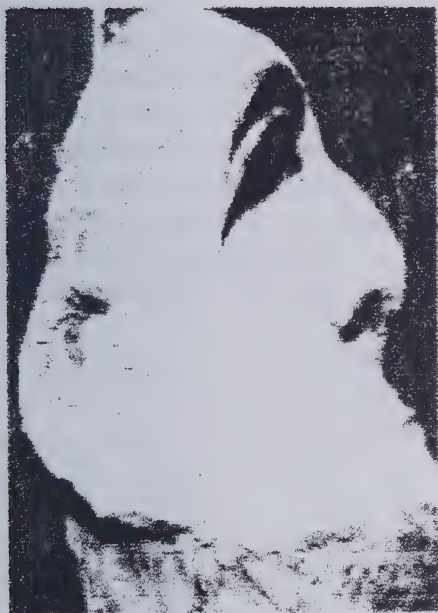
"I'm with you," Cad said, moving to where Perry lay.

He said it a third time, so he'd never forget.

"I'm with you."



## Listen To Nature



## from Field Notes

✧ Lucille Lang Day ✧

### 9. *Sea Slugs*

Oh, to be so unconsciously gorgeous!  
Neither male nor female, but both  
at once, clinging to a strip of eelgrass  
in a sunlit pool on the mud flats,  
with nothing to do except shimmer.

Orange and electric blue lines  
mark head and back; fingerlike  
projections glow with shining rings.  
When two sea slugs meet, they fight,  
biting chunks of flesh from each other.

Moon snails and ghost shrimps go  
about their business. Death is common  
as water; life multiplies like the stars,  
then consumes itself. No one is sorry.  
The tide glides in; clouds roll away.

## Periwinkles

✍ Harry Aoyagi ✍

Little snails with little tiny shells lie in the creek  
The periwinkles shimmy up the reeds like phone men  
Up up the chimney of needs  
The usual flood can send a periwinkle downstream  
Like a cork down the toilet  
A rock one periwinkle lives on  
Is like its overbearing mother  
Sheltering it from life itself  
Periwinkles clutch onto one reed like blackberries  
But a hungry bird takes them like a fruit picker  
Nobody is different in periwinkles society  
Everybody is the same and nobody fights over looks  
All is peaceful in the creek  
Like geeks at a geek convention  
Until a bully bird wipes them out



## Four Haiku

✍ Meg Haskins ✍

Tall slim soldiers dressed  
In black and green uniforms  
Pine trees in waiting

Sing down from the moon  
Red geranium, sweet scent  
From summer before

Mister cardinal  
Look carefully as you feed  
Your family awaits

Dragonflies like darts  
They have no shame in taking  
Partners in midair

## The Tick

✍ Markus Moore ✍

Look at that tick as he crawls through the gutter  
He would love to suck my blood as a calf does an utter  
That eerie lavender skin finds a way into my eyes  
He may slap himself ugly but it will be no surprise  
Even though his appearance looks like some sort of pollution  
This bug is only interested in starting a tick revolution  
He is about as far from me as the country of France  
But he is moving into an offensive lineman stance  
If he comes any closer you'll see a grown man piss his pants  
And if he latches onto my skin you will see a white man dance  
I will ignore him and be very still  
But he is looking straight at me, coming in for the kill  
I'll grab my creative writing pencil and hit him in the head  
Then that damn bug will be comatose or dead

## Cycles

✍ Wilton Parr ✍

A spider web beside the kitchen door,  
not there the day before.  
No rings or spokes like most.  
Instead, fine gauze  
that spans a foot or more  
to cover a cocoon.

At the edge the spider sits,  
motionless till I draw near.  
Don't come so close, she says to me.  
Standing high on legs,  
she stands her ground  
with instincts same as mine.

Easily could I sweep away,  
her home, her being.  
This earthly companion  
that cherishes life as I.  
Could I destroy beauty God created?

Barely could I see the dots moving  
within the gauze.  
Fifty or more young,  
growing, feeding on  
what their mother gave of herself.

Each day I stop to see them grow  
she facing me  
no matter how I move.  
One week, two, the young grow,  
the mother now less alert to my nearness.

Does she know I mean no harm?  
Is there now a bond between us?

No, devotion to creation drains her.  
Rear legs tuck under now  
too weak to face me down.

Another day and the young  
are gone, out into the world.  
Complete.  
The mother spider is dead.

## Fall At Its Best

✍ Gary David Roland ✍

As I recall, I was ten years old and it was nearly fall. The early morning air was starting to turn cooler and crisper, as if blowing in from the cascading spray of a frigid mountain waterfall. After walking outside from a warm, but stuffy house, the air seemed to have a medicinal effect, opening the sinuses and causing my eyes to tear immediately. It felt as though nature were bathing my lungs with her cleansing breath and washing from my eyes the dust, which always remained suspended in midair from the wood burning stove. By late afternoon, even the air outside smelled of smoke. I guess it was because almost everyone started burning leaves as soon as the first one gently glided to the ground.

As I studied their descent, red, yellow, orange, russet--my imagination soon seized control of all five senses and I was propelled into a raging aerial battle. Antiquated aircraft were piloted by unseen phantoms, whose skills varied from expert, to absolutely none. As they soared through the air, the wind racing beneath their wings, I heard their guns blast away at the enemy. I felt the tension as two, sometimes three and four aircraft sped headlong into each other, performing a ritual of reckless bravery. Crashing thunderously, they shook the ground beneath my feet as I watched the planes explode into flames, which flickered with shades of fire. With the aid of smoke drifting towards me, from the burning leaves in a neighbor's yard, I could taste and smell the burning fuel, as each plane lay smoldering in its own ashes. Sometimes, I singled out a fighter and took control. Maneuvering in and out of the aerial chaos, I shot down as many of the enemy as I could, but eventually I also became a casualty of war, my brief moment of glory only a memory. Suddenly, a cease fire was declared by Mr. Driggers, who lived next door.

"It sure is a nice day for raking, isn't it?" Mr. Driggers asked.

"It's a great day, Mr. Driggers, but I think it's a little early for raking, don't you?" I watched as he cleared the landing strip of planes which had already met their doom in a fireball of glory.

"Oh no, it's never too early to get rid of these pesky leaves. If you'd like to earn some money, you can lend me a hand."



“No thanks Mr. Driggers. It doesn’t seem fair to get paid over and over for the same job. I’d rather wait awhile and only do it once.”

This seemed logical to me, since it would be weeks before the last leaves eased their tenuous grasp on their perch atop the red oak in our back yard. When this happened, winter was definitely upon us. The oak would then stand, bare and forbidding, as a giant unclothed sentinel, braced against the icy tempest. As it awaited a new spring wardrobe, it would wear but one other garment, a coverlet of snow.

## Palace Gates

✍ Kiernan McMahon ✍

Twenty of them guard the palace gates,  
Mammoths compared to men, yet still  
Ordinary trees. Twenty in a row  
Brooding over what passes through  
Their mighty arms, helpless to stop.  
Autumn is passing and the giants  
Turn to sleep.

## Winter Day

✍ Lara Wagner ✍

The fuzz of my scarf is frozen,  
Prickly pins take over my fingertips.  
Using practiced balance,  
I make my way,  
Steady and well contemplated.  
My breath billows out before me.  
I feel thick and over protected,  
Wearing three skins,  
Yet unable to withstand the cold.

## Sunday Afternoon Snow

✍ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✍

Snow has fallen all day, unneeded,  
white as the ache in my heart.  
Branches still fly autumn colors  
loaded with heavy powder;  
fish in the pond surface to  
snap at fat clumps of flakes;  
stump of the pear tree we cut down  
months ago, a black scar;  
Pyracantha, burnt orange ladder  
climbing to a roof grown  
indistinct from the sky.

I have no need for words.  
The sleet on the windows,  
the slow breathing of you sleeping,  
the clock's hum—  
our home's soft conversation.  
No moon, but the clouds hold all that snow,  
night softened to gray; no words can lighten  
a sky like that, ease the push and pull that  
holds us tight. What is it we won't say?

Under the streetlight a rabbit shivers along  
fence posts, shadows long as wet pines,  
chicken wire clotted with drifts.  
The heaviness of it—the spinning trees,  
the sharp tongue of wind,  
the fall into the smell of leaves,  
into the cold, into you. Wordless.

# The Way To Dance

✍ Kenneth Bible ✍

Starry dome and peaks,  
Twilight fixtures on  
Obsidian slate; painted blue, and black,  
And black again.

Spires, caps, other accessories  
Of nature, falling, leaping  
Onto the eye, assembling into forms once  
I easily could recall with summer sight.

Assembling into the masses:  
A spider, an arm, the grass,  
And the smoothed brow of the old god,  
Patient, waiting . . . .

Waiting for them to speak to me  
Of that time when I was young,  
And knew the things to say,  
The way to dance, to make them turn.

This my world I have wrought  
With seasoned calculation, and  
Yet cannot see it with these winter eyes.  
But for my starry sky,  
Unchanging, unbending to my will,  
I would all forget, but for the starry sky.



## Sky & Telescope's Challenge:

### Rename the Big Bang

✍ Lucille Lang Day ✍

Big Bloat  
Big Bloom  
Spectacular Sprouting  
Sublime Balloon  
Ultimate Egg  
Grand Hatching  
Grand Opening of the Universe  
Liberation of the Universe  
Great Decentralization  
Great Escape  
Great Inflation  
Immense Distention  
Opening Point  
Burning Point  
Breaking Point  
Point of Creation  
Point of Everything  
Expanding Speck  
Spontaneous Genesis  
Amazing Grain  
Burst of Eternity  
Cosmic Commencement  
End of Nothingness  
End of Oneness  
The Beginning

## from The Evolution of Passion

✍ Lucille Lang Day ✍

### 5. Song of the Opossum

The city has left me homeless.  
I live in a garage in Oakland,  
subsisting on cat food----

Science Diet or Tender Bites.  
I'd prefer a hollow tree and bird eggs,  
but I take what I can get.

This isn't the worst of it.  
One night of sex with a stranger  
with a pointed snout

and snaky tail, and I get an urge  
to clean my pouch.  
Two weeks later

two dozen babies cling  
to my swollen nipples,  
and he's nowhere to be seen.

Still, I'm blessed  
each day with an orange bowl  
of fresh water.

The gods watch me  
through a window. I'm glad  
the cat has a small appetite.

## 8. Dusk Song

I stand naked, covered with wet grass.  
Light stripes the garden;  
jays are sounding their raucous call.

All afternoon the sun has been sliding  
past flat clouds. Now it sits like a Buddha  
on the horizon, calm, indifferent.

I am not indifferent. My nerves  
burn like billions of stars.  
Far fields gleam and trees, flocked

with yellow blossoms, hum. My pulse  
tumbles. The wind tingles, weaving  
the scent of pine with pollen and grass.

Goose flesh spreads down my spine,  
but I am not cold. Come touch me, trace  
circles on my back, draw invisible sparrows

on my thighs. Lie with me, locked  
against morning, night rhythms unfolding  
around us---crickets, owls, our cries.

## Listen To This Place







## Pentimento

✍ Jacqueline Marcus ✍

Strange—how a lake, a particular tree illuminates the shore at odd hours.

I was lying half-awake,  
listening to an owl in the fog's hush,  
the trees were just beginning to sing in their Buddhist robes,  
when an image of a boat came to mind.

It rained for most of the night,  
and the road seemed lyrically quiet. The barn  
slowly appeared with its weathered colors of old paint,  
just past Torrie Road—

where the Juniper guards a hundred acres. A few hawks circled

the intervals of light, and big shaggy clouds,

the kind Coleridge described in his journals  
when he walked all day from Scafell Pike,

“I lay in a state of prophetic Trance & Delight.”  
{He had just taken another dose of laudanum}.

CLOUDS, God-like, immense—  
words could not contain whatever Power he sensed from Nature.

But it's strange how an image will rise from the dark

like a boat floating from the bay's fog,  
how it takes you back to some distant past, a swing, a lake,

a road that follows a field of cows—and how it makes you feel awake,

on a cold day, leaves blinking in the sun.

## Dispensation: My Father Paints the Golden Gate

✍ Phyllis Sanchez Gussler ✍

At the same time  
they strewed their ashes  
he stood on the bridge applying light  
strokes to the women's skirts  
which pushed against their pelvises.  
Above and below he saw—  
it was impossible not to—  
the uniformity of cement.

Below along the pylons  
men-of-war swelled  
beautifully, slightly beating.  
A carrier passed,  
grazed the girders, left  
the infinitesimal tap  
of his slipped purchase.  
He saw on the fingers dropping his brush  
lines inscribed like fossilized clams.  
His eyes clamped closed.

He inhaled broiling engine jelly,  
tasted steel, saw himself  
careening in the brig,  
smelled the rusted cot  
crouched along the wall,  
felt the legs strain  
under the molting mattress.  
He saw the rag in the corner  
open like a hand.

Men die invisibly, he remembered.  
He heard choking  
but could not close his throat.

Nights, he felt the flat-top vibrate  
beneath the women. He tensed,  
felt the bridge fall.  
Once, he noticed his hands—  
two stumps scraping across canvas—  
and was glad  
to be relieved of them.

## Riding The Mad Mouse

✍ Phyllis Sanchez Gussler ✍

They've wrecked it now, that mad machine  
my father strapped me in, my haunches  
tucked tight between the knees of some half-wit boy,  
my father waving, turning away.

Sometimes after the black and whites have played  
themselves out and every phone call is wrong,  
the scene rolls before me like a colorized film.  
The car stammers up. My eyes follow my father's back.  
He stands watching the waves beat the cliffs.  
I keep clanking steeply up, unable to make out  
the beefy arms of the ticket taker below.  
My voice bulges up my throat.  
Behind me the boy squeezes with exuberance.  
My mouth opens. It is a silent picture — I hold back.

Cut to the close-up of my father's cigarette dangling  
street-wise from his mouth: he looks over the ocean  
the way he looks over a waitress —  
knowing she'll break. I think he would like  
to be free of his body, of his small room,  
of my mother's bruised face.

But of course, that was then, and how could I know?  
I was still climbing, watching  
the waves break out of themselves,  
roaring like one big hysterical mouth.  
But of course it wasn't the ocean,  
it was the boy behind me,  
his hot breath in my neck, screaming like a hellhound,  
and I looking down at the god on the ground,  
no bigger than a grubworm,  
My father who art a grubworm, *Look Up, Look Up.*  
I'm blazing off the track, shooting into the sky,

tumbling into these shitty clouds. Look,  
I'm doing the shoop-de-shoop for you,  
dad, no hands. Look at the track buckle,  
at the furious rocking, at the boy shoving  
against me from behind.

It's scrapped now, stubble. Scrubbed.  
I learn this from my father's postcard, featuring  
Hellhound, King of the Delta Blues.  
Hardly visible in the darkness, he's pinned to his chair,  
slag-mouthed. Stunned.

It must be the way the camera holds him down.  
My gut plummets. It is the way  
this worn film runs through me.

But here's the thing: I end up  
under the stark light of an all-night news stand,  
buying a Romare Bearden card — "Carolina Shout" —  
a collage, like a big party.  
Everyone dances in ecstatic colors.  
The faces aren't faces at all,  
just scraps. I always thought  
Hellhound wrote the song — now I don't know.  
My fingers scribble inside.  
The envelope disappears down the chute.  
*Look, I'm sending the shout.*  
*I'm sounding the wreckage.*



## Marietta Street

✍ Shirley Allen ✍

Marietta Street was a dirt road where dust spun around like mini cyclones. On Friday evenings fathers came walking home from a distance, and every time they took a step, dust flew in the air and circled their work boots like red clay clouds. The mothers came too, with bags of food left over from the homes they'd serviced that day. Their white wedge shoes were red by the time they reached the front door. They were tired from cleaning and cooking---tired, sweaty and dirty, but about seven o'clock they'd pull potatoes and onions from the pantry: peel and slice potatoes, skin and slice onions and pour them into an iron skillet halfway filled with hot oil. The wafting aroma of home fries carried for miles, and a quart sized Mason jar made the adults laugh, sing and dance.

Fish were thawed and seasoned, and kindling placed under a wash pot to heat the oil. The fire burned just hot enough to make sparks resembling lightning bugs flap their red wings just above the pot before melting. The fish gently dropped into the grease to become golden brown and the tail crispy enough to eat; then up and out to be placed on a platter layered with a brown bag and surrounded by home fries, cole slaw and corn cakes.

Saturday morning brought peace and tranquility, in preparation for the Lord's day with its delicious chicken dinner. Sunday in the wood framed churches, old men sat near open windows to catch the sporadic breezes that might cool them, and there were chicken coops in practically every backyard.

## Peasant Coat (c.1540)

### after Breughel

✍ Jacqueline Marcus ✍

Before the sun slowly shapes the trees like ruined temples,

before the geese find the semblance of light,

an old village vanishes: Peasants,

plows, a horse, dragging its wagon of wood,

laboriously,

through the fields.

Firs, pines, rocks, mist, a goat jingles its little bell,

and the girl, with a bundle of twigs on her back,

fans the morning fire.

These were the days when a man would pray

for the lonely—as he spit in his hands and began

the long day's rhythmic cycle, the swing

and the blow of the axe, the yellow leaves, falling.

*Protect this tree from the winter winds,*

*let it find its way to the flowered goddess,*

*the laurel summers of the sea.*

The deer browsed the evening shadows,

nipping the patches of grass. The moon

froze above the cottage,

the crackle of ice,

as the women salted the fish

for the next few weeks of hunger.

I wonder who worked the plow in this peasant's coat—

five hundred years of mountains?

# Fat City

✍ Kathryn Starcher ✍

Blue motorcycles

loud music

Marlboro Reds

Friday night salvations

teachers

freaks

fiends

friends or so they may be

moonlight

streetlights

concrete benches

WE are the QUEENS of this CITY

## Full Count

✍ Philip Laganis ✍

The smell of cotton candy fills the air,  
and screams are clear. They echo through my ear.  
The howling crowd is yelling loudly "fair."

The heat is harsh. The sweat drips off my hair.  
A raspy throat. I swiftly chug my beer.  
The smell of roasted peanuts fills the air.

The batter feels the pressure of each stare.  
The count is full. Each fan is filled with fear.  
The howling crowd is yelling loudly "fair."

The ball is lost. It hides behind the glare.  
The sun is bright. My eyes begin to tear.  
The smell of boiling hot dogs fills the air.

The clinching when you can't refuse a dare,  
and building actions linger closely near.  
The howling crowd still yelling. Please be fair.

The stillness of the crowd, a lion's lair.  
Erupted by the sound of joyful cheer.  
The sound of wild screaming fills the air.  
The beauty of the victory we all share.



# Reality Shattered

✍ Joanne Ferguson ✍

Reality shatters  
Plumes of acrid smoke and ash  
Obscure normalcy.

Reality shatters  
American ignorance  
Shards of life falling.

Reality shatters  
No commodities traded,  
Greater than a hug.

## Two Haiku

✍ Eric Harris ✍

Screech

Screech! A thump is heard  
One toe bent back and twisted  
Toy broken, no word

Snow

Soft snow falling slow  
Heat, full blast on the windshield  
Swift wipe, snow is gone

## Coffin, Coffin

✍ Eric Harris ✍

Must I carry this corpse with me,  
Regretting this dirt that stains my inner beauty?  
That stench of life haunts my every inch.  
My creators will bow down to me in the end.

## Flamingo Point

✍ Stella Hastie ✍

It is an end  
Where the land should grieve  
Its last erosions,  
The water pressing the sands  
With just the humming of waves,  
Like music, over the frothing shore.

You'd say sand and foam  
Were both content celebrating  
Union, the lapping  
Just the cooling of fevers, a healing.

Were I shore, I'd close my eyes  
And say, "Why insist?"  
But the silver jaws glint  
As they fall, and right along the maw  
The sands shift, feeding terns and gulls  
Over and over, wave after wave.  
And in coves water has carved  
On the softer flanks, the leveled sands  
Blush into seagrapes and I smell  
Salt blooming into herons.

## Pleasure's Machine

✍ Kiernan McMahon ✍

Warmth and relaxation are all I want as I see the condensation of my breath in a white cloud before me. My cold outstretched fingers encircle the cylindrically shaped handle of the large glass door. As the door opens, warm air rushes over my dry, wind-chapped face. I step inside, and my coat nearly falls off my shoulders while glancing at the slow moving fans above. I hear the dull thud of my book bag plopping down on the wicker couch behind me. Directly in front of me are beans, jars of beans, a row of jars twenty feet long and four feet high; this enormous wall of plastic jars is the biggest selection I have ever seen. Each jar is neatly labeled indicating from what country, and whether they are decaffeinated, or regular. The beans come from countries like Colombia, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and The United States. Each bin with its own unique color and flavor. While staring at a dark French roast, I notice the tiny cherry sized bells on the door begin to give their telltale jingle that someone is entering the store. As if a puppet pulled by a string, my head jerks around to see a man in a navy blue suit coat and matching pants. This is a businessman no doubt, judging by the suit, tie, and cell phone. The man has an air about him that everyone in the room can sense. An irksome presence wafts through the air like a thief stealing away the relaxed atmosphere where I endeavor escape. He shuts his cell phone and taps, counting the seconds. I watch him quickly make his order, speaking harshly to the attendant. Without a nicety he grabs two pennies from the Styrofoam cup to complete his payment. In response to the executive's orders, the small girl behind the counter hastily prepares his drink. When finished, the attendant slams the concoction down, sloshing several drops onto the counter. The man grabs his merchandise gruffly, and storms out of the shop still carrying the burdens of the day. He is far too busy to enjoy what he has just bought. As the man pulls away in his car the hurried presence leaves with him. Things return to normal save for the realization that it is only a matter of time before I leave the protecting walls of the shop and become like the man once again.

The intoxicating aroma of the coffee shop brings me back to what I want to order for myself. The conflict starts again as it does every



time I make my order; the struggle between the regular to be gotten, or to try something new. To be new is to be unknown. To be unknown is to be to one of three things. The drink may be to my liking, the same as the usual (a blend of hazelnut and dark cappuccino overlaying one another), simply divine. If it is of equal liking then there is no harm in trying the stranger. If this interloper should happen to be of better taste, then what an inexhaustible delight to be found inside that steaming porcelain dish. On both accounts it seems quite reasonable to try the new mix of coffee. But suppose for a moment that the unthinkable should happen, that this foreign flavor is less than desirable. What if this brazen liquid should enter the recesses of my mouth and wage war upon my tongue? To shock a day's comfort at one pursing of the lips, is the cost too great to be measured against what might be gained. No, I will not risk it. Everything in life is risk. If one cannot risk then one shall never gain. He who does not risk is the poorest and dullest man of all. Tomorrow, tomorrow I will risk this daring new substance. For now I will stay with what I know, being dull and conservative just for today.

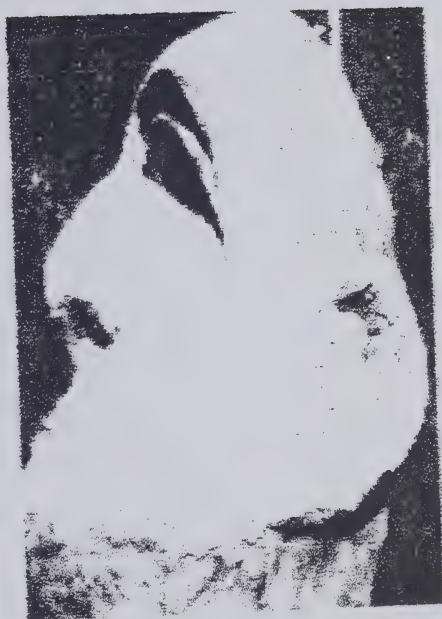
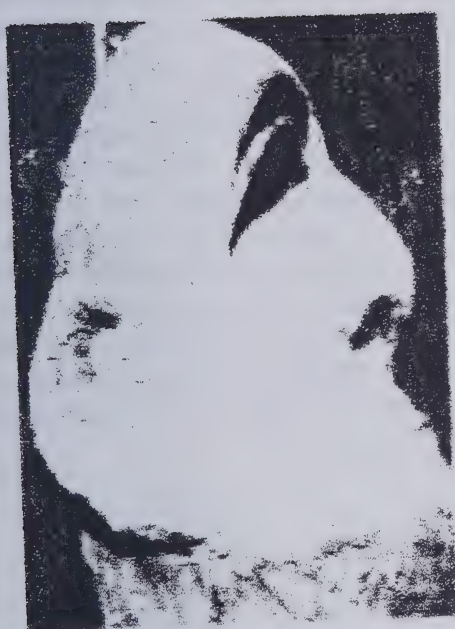
The espresso maker is anything but ordinary. A lot of time and money is put into developing the most sophisticated espresso makers to get the most exotic flavors. Small computers are used to regulate the exact amount of time the machine runs. Steam surges, angrily through the pipes, slamming with all its might into the waiting coffee grains. With all the hissing and snorting of a monster ready to charge, I wait for some sort of explosion; but, somehow this gentle giant, with all the care in the world, gingerly lets the coffee trickle out slowly into the waiting cup. "Click," the computer inside shuts the machine off. Excitement builds as the wonderful fragrance conjugates around me lifting my spirits. I can see the steam billowing off the top the cup. Smoothly the cup is put aside and milk is carefully poured into a stainless steel ebrick. After the milk has been frothed, it is then poured into the coffee cup along with a squirt of hazelnut syrup. Topped with the thickest whipped cream I've ever tasted, my glorious drink is now ready.

Turning around, I notice the soft lighting for the first time. Tables for two neatly line the large glass window. Sitting in one of these remarkably comfortably wicker chairs, I notice the thin lamps on the table cast a yellow hue over the entire area of the table and myself. As much as I like these two-person tables, I prefer the cozy couch in the corner of the shop. I contemplate the poor man who rushed in and out so quickly he didn't have time to enjoy what he had purchased. To me the

enjoyment of coffee is more than drinking it. It's the atmosphere you drink it in that counts. Curled up in my little ball on the couch, my troubles seem to fall from my shoulders. I have not a care in the world, save for the characters in the tattered novel I am reading. This is what I have waited for the entire day.



## Listen To Your Heart







## Dancing In The Night Garden

✍ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✍

I've been waiting by a door that has finally opened.  
Our dance begins with late jasmine filling  
the autumn darkness, settling on our shoulders.  
Bats skimming the pond's surface,  
leathery wings slapping still, moist air,  
golden fish threading through water hyacinths.  
Graceful black spider, jacketed in yellow,  
swaying on her web. A fat bumblebee  
sleeping in the rocking lemon basil.  
We waltz across cracked red bricks,  
palm to stubborn palm. Rusty chains  
of the porch swing speak in a whispery sigh—  
heel scraping on warped boards.  
A sharp wind bends the thin pines,  
bows the shedding oaks. Warm hand  
folding in the small of my back, spinning me  
one more measure. Birds whirring  
between dark branches stitch the evening closed.

## Haiku

✍ Patricia Kennedy Bostian ✍

Clouds spread covering  
the late moon. A young girl pulls  
a white robe over her head.

## Compassionate Tickle

✍ Danielle Goldfisher ✍

Face resting in dominant palm.  
Pointy wetness circling lobes.  
Fingers running down slender neck.  
Grapefruit breast cupped in hand.  
Sweet nipples perk with salute,  
to strong hands with patient touch.  
As trail is followed to golden gates,  
happy tears begin to bead.  
Gazing into chocolate eyes,  
grasping for the heart not thrown.

## Old Man Of The Forest

✍ Ryan McMahon ✍

All alone it stood  
Like lightning pointed skyward.  
Its arms an unnatural white  
Oh, the beauty of its solitude  
Rooted so firmly in its place.

# Heat

✍ Erica Tyler-Haw ✍

The scent of the sun arose from his dusty blue jeans,  
The aroma erotic as he stretched out on his stomach  
On the coolness of the buckling kitchen linoleum.  
I stretched out on his back, burying my face  
In his faded t-shirt, which smelled of the desert heat,  
Sun roasted rocks, Joshua trees, and the red  
Martian dirt that veils the floor of this wasteland,  
Staining everything shades of copper rust.  
The still house baked us with its sentinel silence  
Lying like sun-dried lizards with the back porch door  
Open to a landscape of mountainous black rocks,  
Brownish vegetation, and wilted translucent flowers,  
Bombarded with relentless waves of heat.  
I felt his muscles shift, his body prepare  
To sigh, I held my breath, and when he breathed  
I think I cried into his back, trying  
To moisten the dirt on his clothes so they'd take root  
And keep him prisoner wrapped within a cell  
Of cotton and denim and force him to stay a while  
Longer with me in our home which was dying,  
Coughing up red dust and tumbleweeds  
As it shrank further back from the road each day.  
Finally when he left, I hated myself  
For crying, and I hated him for seeing  
Me so vulnerable. I sang to him  
In shades of amber because I didn't know  
How else to tell him that I loved him, his eyes  
Had been like a two-lane highway rollercoastering  
Through the canyon at night. I wanted to wipe  
The sunset from his eyes, his final kiss  
Had left me un-alone and enfolded  
With his scent, long after he'd passed by.



## Peachy Keen

 **Dino Bryant** 

One peach  
left  
in the basket

meaning  
so much  
to us both

a quick  
delicious  
snack  
for  
me

a fine  
compliment  
to  
a ham sandwich

and  
a pint  
of milk.

but  
for  
you . . .

a  
tantalizing  
dessert

that  
placates  
your

savage  
quakes

and  
replaces  
that can  
of V-8

in  
tandem  
with  
a slice  
of devil's food  
cake

you  
bite  
and

slurp  
to  
the  
very core

making  
a  
sticky  
blush

one peach  
left  
in the basket

and  
on its way  
to  
school

I'll

have  
an  
apple

## Fairy-tale Storm

✍ Jennifer E. Pagliaro ✍

branches hit the window pane  
tin roof tink from drops of rain  
lilies float in autumn streams  
lightning strikes and shakes the beams

pitter patter as they fall  
droplets splash against the wall  
soothing whistles from the wind  
thunder breaks the folly trend

blankets warming frosty toes  
fires flicker with flaming glows  
pages turn in leather bounds  
the smell of tea and sog surround

see that saber in the storm  
hero shows his knightly form  
drop the book at lightning strike  
giving hound unsightly fright

pick it up and turn the page  
back to battle the foes engage  
princess wails with utter fear  
dragon slain before its lair

princess free her heart is won  
close the book the story's done  
pour the tea and take some sips  
down the chimney water drips

pick another novel out  
open it and read about  
hobbits fairies dwarves and elves  
forests thickets caves and dells

magic potions wizard's spells  
mythical legends no one tells  
check the windows check the door  
snuggle back upon the floor

# To Trick Or Treat

✍ Gary David Roland ✍

On this night of moans and groans,  
You'll see sights that will chill your bones.  
Headless men with hearts of stone,  
Roam the earth by midnight tones.

Ghosts and goblins fly through the air,  
They have no worries or earthly cares.  
Evil monsters creep up from their lairs,  
To chase little children they love to scare.

Wicked witches all dressed in black,  
Fly through the air with a cat on their back.  
Grave robbers leaving from a dingy shack,  
Dig all night just to fill their sacks.

Out in the dark trick or treaters will walk,  
Scared to death they all start to talk.  
Unaware of the fiend his prey he stalks,  
His flesh so cold it's as white as chalk.

Hiding in the bushes or up in a tree,  
He hungers for children like you and me.  
And he knows for us it's hard to see,  
Dressed up like a pirate or a buzzing bee.

He darts out quickly your arm he grabs,  
No matter how hard you kick or jab.  
His feast he will eat on a cold damp slab,  
Slicing and cutting with a knife he stabs.

If you're fast and don't dawdle around,  
Take off running don't act like a clown.  
If in your direction you know he is bound,  
Don't be like the others who were never found.



Trick or treating is fun we all know,  
But it's not for those who walk too slow.  
The one beside you could be a foe,  
You'll know for sure if his eyes start to glow.

His teeth will get longer as you run fast,  
Don't look back or you may not last.  
This race with a creature from the ancient past,  
Let not his eyes on you be cast.

Please stay home on Halloween,  
Don't go out dressed like a king or queen.  
You can be these things in a nightly dream,  
Wake up the next morning and still be seen.

# The Booger

✍ Danielle Goldfisher ✍

Originally unnoticed,  
now a Taj Mahal;  
As we spoke,  
there it was, glaring at me,

Green as a Virgo's birth.  
From the edge  
of its dark cave,  
it began its escape.

Its intriguing glow drew me in.  
Optionless,  
I stared,  
magnetized.

I tried to look away,  
But,  
Like a bloody car crash,  
I was powerless.

# Perception

✍ Marisha Corey ✍

There once was a girl who took sleeping pill after sleeping pill.  
Death never once crossed her mind.

She truly had no desire to die!

All she could think of was to sleep and sleep . . .

*--My sight is fading, my racing mind grows slower still. All is calm,  
blessed peace . . .*

But her tortured throat continued swallowing  
as if in reflex to the pouncing refrain through her head:

*--I'm so tired . . . I'll get a good rest . . .*

*Sooo tired, but I'll get a real good rest . . .*

There once was an artist who loved the color red.

But every time he mixed the paints, he couldn't produce  
the color red that he envisioned. So he began to try new medias: red clay,  
red lipsticks, nail polish, anything and everything to produce the color  
red.

But the true red was hiding, cowering, somewhere behind these imposter  
colors--these shades of defeat.

One morning as he looked into the mirror, searching his eyes for the  
answer, as he often did, he realized his eyes would never tell, for they  
would never know and his frustration was overwhelming. His fists  
balled.

*"If I could separate myself, I would beat the answer out of him!"* His  
fists lashed out, but then he fought back. Thousands of shards rained  
down on him, each blade mirroring him.

He looked down at his fists, he had discovered his red.

Now he could finally produce his masterpiece . . . but it wasn't enough to  
paint the scene that was in his mind. So he cut. *"These trees, this mist,  
it's red on the canvas now."* He cut deeper. *"This ocean, this bleeding  
ocean, the perfect red and now the world shall see my mind."*

And as he painted, growing weaker and weaker with each stroke of the  
brush, all he could hear was a flowing melody of words; "I've found the  
perfect red, my masterpiece is born . . . the perfect red, the perfect red . .  
." the lullaby went on and on, stroke after stroke layer after layer until the

paint ran thin.

There once was a person who believed in goodness.

They believed that murder was wrong, and stealing, and telling bold lies . . . the usual bad stuff. One day as they sat on a bus, a stranger sat down next to them and asked a strange question.

“Do you worship the devil?”

Flabbergasted and more than a little put off, they replied with a firm “NO!”

The stranger then asked: “Do you believe in God?”

They replied, “Well I believe in morals and goodness . . . I believe some things are wrong, and some things are right . . . but do I believe there is a God? No.”

And as the person lived each day, the refrain that went through their head was God does not exist, there is no God . . . I'm too smart for that. God does not exist, there is no God . . . I'm too smart for that! God does not exist . . .

There once was a bus that traveled throughout the world.

And on it sat Satan.

Going from place to place, laughing . . .

Laughing as he sees that all it takes is a twist in perception . . .

A little blindness on one part, a bit more focus on another . . .

It's all in how you look at it.

# Better Than I Deserve

✍ Ryan McMahon ✍

This sin forgiven,  
This stain removed,  
This soul redeemed by blood . . .  
Better than I deserve

This murderer set free,  
This criminal forgiven,  
This enemy now a son,  
Better than I deserve

This given heartbeat,  
This fleeting breath,  
This blessed assurance,  
Better than I deserve

This day, this hour,  
This ransomed time,  
This life, and after death . . .  
Better than I deserve

This crown eternal,  
This face to behold,  
This Savior . . .  
Better than I Deserve.

# You Can Keep

✍ Kathryn Starcher ✍

the spaces between your empty words

your thoughtless

broken

up

sentences

completely devoid of

feelings

or

adjectives

or

even

truth



# The Little Death

✍ Kelly Bradley ✍

Sex wore a love mask  
And paraded down my street  
Carrying his proud banner high.

Sex wore a love mask  
And piped a sugary tune.  
I ran to taste this wild new joy.

Sex wore a love mask  
To cover up his death face  
With a cold smooth perfect gentleman's smile.

Sex wore a love mask  
And snapped each precious bone  
My ivory heart-cage crushed in iron hands.

## Jack

✍ Kathryn Starcher ✍

I sit in darkness with you listening to the rain  
which falls in perfect rhythm to your guitar  
I suppose I am not the ugly person I thought myself to be  
A small sparkle of beauty you could foresee  
Like the rain by its simple, lovely smell which perfumes  
the air on these dark, awesome, cloud-filled days  
like thunder that steals the beat of your heart  
only to slowly return it

# The Yellow Flower

✍ Reza Jarrahizadeh ✍

نرگسی زرد به معشوق برآشفته ز خواب  
گفتن عشق به این رنگ به این رسم و رسوم  
راز عشقی است به زی‌بایی گلبرگ گلم  
قصه ای است که در دل رازها دارد زما  
قصه پژمردن گل در زمین پر چمن  
گر بخواهی بشنوی پس گوش، گوش  
با کس دی‌گر بنوشتی ساقی عشق و غزل  
نرگس زردم بداد و جام عشقم نوش، نوش  
آن پسر دی‌گر توان دوستی با او نداشت  
در همان باغ پر از گل‌های سرخ  
با گل و دختر وداع کرد و برفت  
آسمان نی‌لگون را خواب کرد  
عکس دختر را بدید در آسمان  
با دلی گریان بگفت از حال رفت  
آرام جان و مونس قلب رمیده ای  
قدر عشقت را ندانستی دگر، حال در آن ابرها جویش دگر

دختری داد ز فرزانی و ز عشق و کمال  
عشق او گفت که در دولت ما رسم نبود  
دخترک گفت که از رنگ گلم هیچ نرنج  
در دل غنچه زردم قصه ای هست دراز  
قصه دل‌کندن برگ از بزرگی درخت  
حال با تو گویم این گفت و شنود  
نرگس زردی بدادم تا گران روزی رسد  
بعد از آن دی‌گر به من هیچ مگوی  
چون دگر روزی و سلامتی گذشت  
دخترک را خواست در باغی بزرگ  
نرگس زردش بداد بی هیچ حرف  
روز دی‌گر چون کنار آب رفت  
شاخه گل را بدید در غر آب  
بار دی‌گر عشق او پی‌دار گشت  
از من جدا مشو، که توام نور دیده ای  
ناگهان از زیر پایش خاک گفت

## The Yellow Flower

✍ Reza Jarrahizadeh ✍

A girl gave from her prudence and perfection

A yellow flower to a boy waking into love

With her. "It isn't customary in this land,"

He said, "To show your love with this color."

She said "Don't be angry at my flower's color,

There's a love secret pretty as the petals

In the belly of the bud, a long story

Which holds the secret of our love;

"It's the tale of leaves leaving the tall tree,

The wilting of flowers in a land full of grass.

If you want whatever I'll tell you, whatever you'll hear,

Listen, listen; I gave you the yellow rose

For the day that you desire to drink

The cup of love and sing the song of someone else.

After that say nothing, but give my flower back

And drink from that empty cup for days and years."

On one far flung day the boy's love faded

And into a great red garden he went to meet her,

Giving the girl her gift back, saying nothing.

Leaving, he bowed farewell to both the rose and girl.

In a time beyond, he met the sea and strolled beside it

So slowly and relaxed he put the sky to sleep,

And waves within the water, until he saw the rose

Under the ocean, and her face that hung above him

And for a second time, he woke into love.

"Eyes' light, life's shape and heart's companion,"

He said, "Don't leave," and then he fell again.

From under his foot, the soil told him

Cherish her love, you never understood it.

Now you'll have to search for her in the clouds.

## Draw

✍ Wael Salman ✍

It's hard to draw the picture of your face  
Sea eyes dive in, let them take you somewhere  
To the sky, to heaven, such a nicer place

Famous drawers said "No" in this hard case  
Da Vinci's *Lisa* now is everywhere  
But it's hard to draw the picture of your face

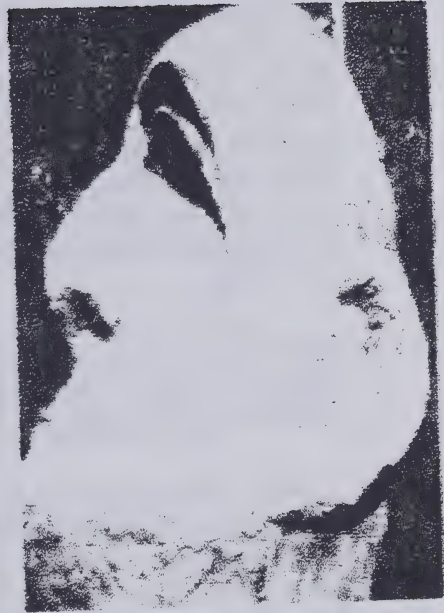
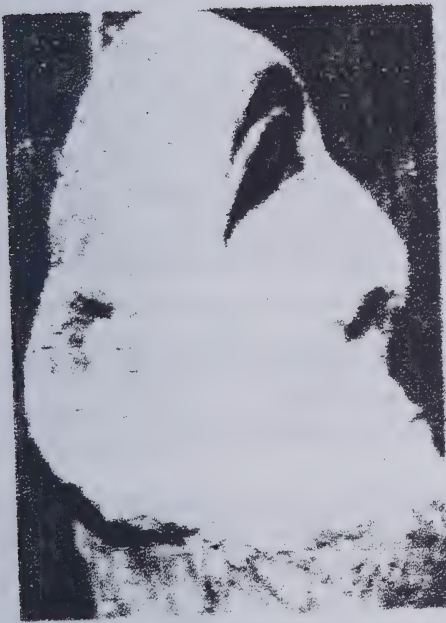
I can do anything, study, get A's  
To make you happy, take you anywhere  
To my heart, my soul, such a beautiful place

Don't go, don't let me see you, play chase  
Because I'll smell your perfume in the air  
It's hard to draw the picture of your face

Picasso, if he tried to draw a trace  
Of you, he'd fail, he'd look to someone to share  
No one would like to be in Pablo's place

But with me, love, I promise to be your brace  
I want to touch you from your toes to your hair  
It's hard to get a smile from your face  
I feel that I'll go to another place . . .

## Listen To The Poet





# Poet Lucille Lang Day

## An Interview

*Listen, Listen:* How do you go about writing a poem? Specifically, how did you go about writing "The Evolution of Passion?"

L. L. D.: That one was written over a period of years, and it was fun. After I'd written three of the sections, I realized what I was doing. It's often that way for me: the theme and structure of a piece emerge from the process of writing. I don't have it all worked out beforehand. I don't see "The Evolution of Passion" as being anthropomorphic, because I'm not saying that the animals are like us but that we are like the animals. We're part of the biological world, every aspect of us including our emotions, our intelligence, our creativity—even art forms such as music, dance, and architecture—is found in the animal kingdom. We're all part of the universe, and we all came from the same place. Every atom in our bodies has already passed through two exploding stars on average before it got to us.

*Listen, Listen:* Many of the poems in *Infinites* are full of scientific details. Do you do research for these poems?

For instance, the poem "Flyspeck on a Lobster Lip."

L. L. D.: What happens is that sometimes I will read something in a newspaper or book and it will lead to a poem. Other times I go out into nature and observe something firsthand. In the case of "Flyspeck on a Lobster Lip," I was inspired by an article I read in the *The New York Times*. In some cases, I don't have to look things up, but then other times I do look things up, and I look through my field guides, thinking about what the right image is. If I want to put a redwood tree in my poem, for example, I might look up the shape of the leaves, or of the cones, and so on.

*Listen, Listen:* I noticed your daughter Tamarind has a name that comes from nature. Does she like her name?

L. L. D.: A tamarind is an Indian date tree, and I found it in an

encyclopedia in the section on trees; my other daughter I named Liana, which is a tropical vine that grows in the rain forest, climbing on trees. There are thousands of different kinds of lianas. Yes, they both like their names.

*Listen, Listen: Listen, Listen:* Have you ever met Vera Rubin? [The astronomer who discovered dark matter.] It seems amazing to me that she could get her PhD, teach, do research and have a large family all at the same time. Do you think it's harder or maybe easier because they expect to be good at family, for women to be involved in a science career and a family both?

L. L. D.: No, I've never met Vera Rubin. I think that having a family and any career, not just one in science, is difficult, but supremely worth it. There is always a juggling act. In my own case, I was always juggling three things: family, poetry, and my paying career in science writing and science/math education. I suppose I could have written more poetry if I hadn't been doing the other two things, but I think the perspective and experience provided by my family and work life make my poetry stronger and more informed than it otherwise would have been. Also, I would have baked more chocolate chip cookies and attended more school field trips if I hadn't had been working full-time and trying to write poetry, but I think I'm a better role model for my daughters and I bring much more to my relationship with them because I've always been fully connected to the world outside the home.

*Listen, Listen:* Your poem "Sky & Telescope's Challenge: Rename The Big Bang," made me laugh, but I was wondering if it was found poetry, and if you had seen any of the entries people sent in, or even knew what the winning entry was.

L. L. D.: They decided to keep the name Big Bang, and not use any of the entries, but I actually did enter all those in the competition, though with some of them I was just trying to be funny. All I know is they decided not to rename the Big Bang, but I expected they would at least publish samples of the silliest, most poetic, most apt entries, etc. I came up with 100 myself, then I culled them to create the poem, adding a lot of things I hadn't entered in the contest, like "reason for butterflies," "source of harmony," "source of chaos," but when I showed it to people,

they liked the actual entries best, so I took out all the extra stuff.

*Listen, Listen:* What poets do you particularly like?

*Lucille Lang Day:* For contemporary poets writing about science and nature, Pattiann Rogers, Alison Hawthorne Deming, & *Field Guide* by Robert Haas; for autobiographical poetry, Plath & Sexton & Lowell. Some of my poems are confessional, and that word can have a negative connotation, self-revelation for shock value, not really processing experience. But I value work that deals thoughtfully with the very powerful, deepest, even most awful feelings, the most horrible experiences that we've had.

*Listen, Listen:* What would you say to a student who reacts negatively to the material in a poem. For example, James Dickey's "Sheep Child?"

L. L. D.: I would ask them to look at the way language is used, and ask does this make you think any differently about something ugly or distasteful, say, a malformed animal; as for a confessional poem on abortion, drug abuse, killings: does the poem tell you any more about the subject than reading about it in the newspaper or seeing it happen? The poem has to take it to some other level, but any subject can be dealt with.

As for confession and autobiography, in my own poetry, I'm always hoping that these things resonate with other people. I hope that it goes beyond the strictly personal. Even with the most disturbing confessional poetry like that of Sylvia Plath or Anne Sexton—perhaps it was drawing them toward death, but even there it's not totally personal, because it brings us to that experience as well, so we can empathize with it and recognize it, to ward it off if nothing else. I was clinically depressed for a long period in the 80's, but poetry helped bring me out of it. I think that perhaps Plath & Sexton, had they been born fifteen years later, would still be alive, given that the therapy and drugs we have now are so much better.

*Listen, Listen:* "Tumor" is a haunting poem. Have you ever wondered if cancer has some kind of a purpose, evolutionary or otherwise, other than simply weeding out people past the age of child-bearing?

L. L. D.: I guess I see it as a metaphor for greed, because in taking over



the body and its resources, the tumor ultimately causes its own death. As for an evolutionary purpose, I don't know.

*Listen, Listen:* Is there any trend you see developing for 21<sup>st</sup> century poetry?

L. L. D.: Now there are still things happening with post-structuralist and post-modern poetry, but that type of poetry influenced by Derrida and deconstruction has been around for thirty years, yet it is one current direction. And there is the New Formalist direction, which has a particular concern with narrative and wanting to use traditional poetic techniques, assonance, meter, etc.; and there's the whole poetry slam scene, with the emphasis on oral poetry, emotional, accessible and political. So there are three very different movements, and it shows how alive poetry really is, and diverse, not monolithic. Some poets are bothered by work that's very different from their own, but nothing bothers me. I think it's really wonderful that all these things are going on, because the more voices the better. Also, sometimes poets who are very good will be put off by the idea that at every café there are readings and books are published at all levels of skill, but again, I think it's wonderful, (as with music, people should play at all levels, as long as they're playing).

*Listen, Listen:* Are you working on another book now, and do you have a theme or a title in mind?

L. L. D.: The themes evolve as I start writing. With *Infinites*, I didn't think of the theme in advance, but I realized that I had a lot of poems that dealt with science and nature and human experience. The same was true for *Fire In The Garden*, *Wild One*, and *Self-Portrait With Hand Microscope*, my first book, which is a sampler of the types of poetry I write—science poems, autobiographical ones, surreal ones. Some of the poems from *Self-Portrait* appear in my subsequent books, which develop each of the three threads.

My new book is going to be called *Conjunctions* and will experiment with language, especially conjunctions, both literal and metaphoric (an idea I got while reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*). Until now, I feel like I haven't experimented enough with language.

*Listen, Listen*: You're fifty-four years old now and you've completed four books of poetry; I think this latest one *Infinities* is your best. Do you feel like you're hitting your stride as a poet?

L. L. D.: That's an interesting question. I feel like I'm always becoming, evolving, getting better and more reliable, more competent, but at the same time I'm trying new things, experimenting just the way I did twenty years ago, so I'm never fully developed. There's always another peak to climb.









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